DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 454 894 JC 010 476

AUTHOR	Parks, Nancy W.
TITLE	West Virginia Association for Developmental Education Annual Report, February 2001.
INSTITUTION	West Virginia Association for Developmental Education.
PUB DATE	2001-02-00
NOTE	15p.; Also referred to as "Fifth Annual Report on the State of Developmental Education in West Virginia."
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Basic Skills; *Basic Writing; Compensatory Education; *Developmental Studies Programs; Higher Education; *Remedial Programs; Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS	*Fairmont State College WV

ABSTRACT

This report discusses the state of developmental education in West Virginia from the perspectives of faculty, staff, and administrators throughout the state. It begins by defining developmental education as more than just "remedial" education and relying on faculty, focused coursework, and peer and professional support to help students overcome academic deficiencies. The report lists several reasons why colleges offer developmental education programs: (1) there are no state standards in any state that require high school seniors to demonstrate their readiness for entry into introductory college courses; (2) many previously "unskilled" jobs now call for a more educated workforce; and (3) many non-native students enroll in developmental skills courses as part of their orientation to American college life. Also described are educators' concerns about developmental education, which include: (1) colleges and universities may use inappropriate placement mechanisms; (2) developmental programs rely too heavily on part-time employees; (3) administrators often assume that human faculty can be replaced with technology; and (4) students are enrolling in developmental skills classes before they have graduated from high school. The report ends with profiles of developmental studies programs at various colleges in West Virginia, including Shepherd College, Potomac State College, West Virginia State College, and seven others. (EMH)

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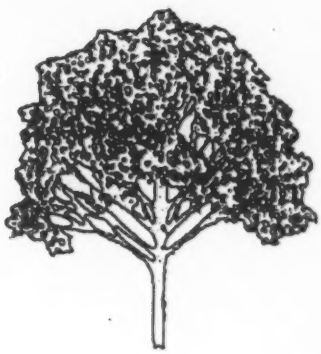
ED 454 894

West Virginia Association for Developmental Education

February 2001



Annual Report

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TC010476

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February 5, 2000

West Virginia House & Senate Education Committees Members:

This **Fifth Annual Report on the State of Developmental Education in West Virginia** conveys the collected sentiments of many faculty, staff, and administrators of developmental education programs across the state. I'm sure that the developmental programs at the colleges included in this report would be happy to hear any comments you may have about their work with developmental college students. A list of contact names is provided for each institution submitting a profile for this report.

What's most important to keep in mind discussing developmental education is that college students enrolled in non-college credit classes are remarkably like the non-developmental students. They do have weaknesses in writing and algebra, but they often have strengths in other areas to help offset those weaknesses. A student who struggles through algebra, for instance, may be a history buff; the student who hates to write an essay may love to go to Biology lab. Helping students overcome deficiencies in one or both of these areas is the primary role of developmental education programs. Developmental programs ensure that students who are otherwise prepared for college are given the opportunity to prove themselves.

Also, consider what it would be like to be an academically average high school graduate, a stay-at-home mother with three pre-schoolers, or a "downsized" middle manager going to the local state college to sign up for classes. Students sent to take a math placement test are confronted with this:

$$\text{For all } x > 0, \quad \frac{x^2 + x - 6}{x + 3} =$$

For those of us with a decent algebra background, we can tackle this problem; for those of us with a limited background, imagine our initial panic—despite the fact that the test is multiple choice. Practical life experiences tell us that we're all developmental in one area or another. (Personally, I'm ever so thankful that the state never decided to mandate swimming or car repair!)

This report should be enlightening in many areas, and on behalf of **WVADE**, thank you for your thoughtful attention to the information provided.

Sincerely,

Nancy W. Parks

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The members of the West Virginia Association for Developmental Education are pleased to submit this year's annual report on the state of developmental education in West Virginia.

It is our goal as a professional organization to make known the concerns and accomplishments that quality developmental education programs bring to the state colleges in West Virginia.

Developmental Education Defined

Developmental education is what students and teachers used to refer to as "remedial" education. Current developmental education, however, goes far beyond the boundaries of traditional remedial education. In the past, remedial education was notorious for worksheets, skills "mastery" and limited interaction with faculty. Today developmental education relies on faculty, focused coursework, and peer and professional support to help students overcome their academic deficiencies. It is definitely NOT the same kind of remedial education that was offered in college just a generation ago.

Today, developmental education engages students, appreciates their life experiences, recognizes their academic anxieties as well as their shortcomings, and requires that students become active participants in their own learning. It is driven by the demands of the college's academic requirements. The skills they learn in developmental programs are relevant to what they will be expected to know in their college-credit courses. Furthermore, developmental education programs recognize that students learn in different ways, via different learning styles, and with varying learning and motivational challenges.

Some developmental skills students, but certainly not all, have learning disabilities. Some, but certainly not all, are non-native speakers of English. Some, but certainly not all, are adult students who have been out of high school for several years. Some, but certainly not all, are GED recipients, and some, but certainly not all, are traditional-age college students, many of whom were honor roll students in high school. In short, there is no one "typical" student in need of developmental skills instruction. Developmental education as an academic and professional field recognizes that.

Why Colleges Offer Developmental Education

According to the West Virginia Higher Education Report Card 2000, approximately one-half of all college freshmen in our state require some sort of developmental education services (p. 64). Nationally, over 30% of all entering freshmen took at least one remedial course in 1991 (Boylan, "Research in Developmental Education," 1995). These developmental skills classes are offered not just at state-funded schools but at private, liberal arts institutions, as well. For years, students signed up for such courses voluntarily, but many states now require students to take developmental skills courses if students do not meet minimum criteria in certain academic areas, most notably English, math, and reading, but at some schools, even in science. The state of West Virginia instituted such mandates in English and math just a decade ago.

Developmental education, though, has been a necessary component of higher education for well over a century. Offering basic skills instruction was a responsibility assumed by educators when higher education itself became more egalitarian. For example, half of all Harvard applicants were failing that college's entrance exam in 1879. Land grant acts of 1862 and 1890 forged a connection between the federal government and colleges and universities, requiring these new colleges to offer developmental education courses if they were to serve all the citizens they intended to. By 1946, the GI Bill of Rights had encouraged more than one million World War II veterans to enroll in college. The funding entailed in this legislation allowed colleges to open much-needed study skills programs tutoring services (Casazza, 1999, p. 3).

As K. Pat Cross states in her book, Beyond the Open Door, by the 1970's, more women, more poor students, and more students with special needs decided that education was "the way to a better job and a better life than that of their parents" (cited in Casazza, 1999, p. 3).

Despite the socio-economic reasons for developmental education's presence in higher education, many continue to wonder why entering freshmen, especially recent high school graduates, fail to meet the state of West Virginia's minimum criteria for entrance into college-credit courses in math and English. There are many reasons, and a few are detailed in the following pages:

There are no state standards in any state that require high school seniors to demonstrate their readiness for entry into introductory college courses.

It is entirely possible for a student to be an "average" or even "above average" student in high school but still enter college with deficiencies, according to a report prepared by the National Study of Community College Remedial Education entitled No One to Waste: A Report to Public Decision-Makers and Community College Leaders. Unlike the inherent connections between materials covered in grade school and those covered in middle school, for example, or the connection between those covered in middle school and those in high school, the academic expectations for exit from high school do not reflect the expectations for entry into college.

English and math skills present a particular concern. Students in senior year English classes, for example, which often focus on the study of literature, are often at a disadvantage if their English classes have not incorporated composition skills to a significant degree because freshman English courses are most often composition courses that require a satisfactory writing sample for entry.

Further, students who do not take a math class their senior year of high school often "lose" those algebra skills that must be demonstrated on a college math placement test. According to Dr. Bob McCabe, President Emeritus of the Miami-Dade Community College System and author of No One to Waste, "Math is the greatest hurdle for deficient students," and unless we wish to "reset our expectations" of what is expected of an entering college student in terms of math, we should not expect to see enrollments decline in developmental math classes in college (West Virginia Association for Developmental Education conference keynote speech, November 2000).

One limited study at Fairmont State College illustrates this particular concern. Of eighty-three students enrolled in one instructor's mandated developmental skills math courses, twenty-nine, or 35%, had taken and passed up to Algebra II in high school; twenty, or 24%, had even taken and passed through Trigonometry. Numbers can never tell an entire story, but if these sections are representative of most developmental math sections, then indeed we should all be concerned if almost six out of ten developmental math enrollees had exceeded their high school's math requirements.

Furthermore, many students who graduate from high school do so with a diploma, but not necessarily with a "warranty" from their school indicating their basic skills proficiencies on standardized tests. Although statistics from standardized tests can not tell the entire story, either, it is troubling that many high school diplomas are actually "certificates of completion."

Finally, high school is compulsory and higher education is elective, and there is currently no expectation that the curriculum and instruction from high school will necessarily prepare students for college-level work.

Many previously "unskilled" jobs now call for a more educated workforce.

Mr. James Skidmore, Vice-Chancellor for Community & Technical College Education and Workforce Development in West Virginia, reported early in January 2001 that 85% of all workforce positions now require a level of skills that were unheard of just a generation ago (Wallace, 2001). And "on-the-job" training will only take a worker so far up the ladder.

As Vice-Chancellor Skidmore proclaims, "We can't just throw unprepared students into the fire" (Wallace, 2001). As a result, many non-traditional aged workers must do something they never before thought necessary: go to college. But it is unrealistic to expect a 40-something laborer, for example, to be able to enroll in an algebra-based Technical Math class without a review of basic algebra, a course that he or she may not have even had in high school.

WV Senate Education chairman Lloyd Jackson represents the sentiments of many when he proposes that a more skilled workforce will help to ensure that employees—as well as the jobs and employers themselves—stay in West Virginia (Wallace, 2001). The developmental education programs in the state's colleges are a crucial ingredient in this re-training formula. A more aggressive recruitment effort of this population would indicate that enrollments in developmental education programs in West Virginia should actually increase.

Many non-native students enroll in developmental skills courses as part of their orientation to American college life.

Many colleges actively recruit foreign students as part of their cultural diversity projects. The only requirement for foreign students to enroll in college courses is to pass the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), which is a rigorous test of grammar, translation, and conversation, but which does not address the English composition needs of introductory, college-credit English classes.

After completion of a college's ESL (English as a Second Language) program—if one even exists—many foreign students are automatically enrolled in a developmental skills composition course. In some colleges, there is no separate ESL program and the college's developmental education program must meet the needs of not only unprepared American students, but unprepared foreign students, as well.

Developmental Educators' Concerns

Colleges and universities may use inappropriate placement mechanisms.

Many colleges and universities use the scores from standardized tests, such as the ACT and SAT, to determine initial placement in introductory college courses in English and math. However, according to Dr. Bob McCabe, who had been a ten-year official with the College Board, "There's no intent for the SAT or ACT to be used as a placement test…only as a screen if you want to exclude someone from a testing requirement" (WVADE keynote, November 2001). The State College System of West Virginia mandates include minimum ACT or SAT scores in math and English. Although many state colleges permit students to take additional placement tests to supplant low ACT or SAT scores, other state colleges have chosen not to. Therefore, some developmental students may fit a "developmental" profile, but the profile itself may have been erroneously defined.

Such inappropriate use of standardized placement tests is the focus of a publication of the United States Education Department Office for Civil Rights. The Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights there states that "all students deserve high standards and excellent preparation, and testing should make that possible." Although the Education Department Office for Civil Rights "supports the fair use of tests," it urges colleges to decide whether the standardized tests they use are "accurate and reliable measures of the skills, knowledge, or abilities they want to evaluate" (Wallace, 2001).

One particular study at Fairmont State College in the fall 2000 semester showed that 83% (405 of 488) of students were required to enroll in the developmental skills composition course solely because of low or non-existent ACT English or SAT verbal scores. A writing sample, of course, is the preferred way to determine course placement in a composition course and, given the opportunity, many of these "default" developmental enrollments could have been able to enroll in a college-credit English class their first semester had they been given the opportunity to write a placement essay.

Developmental educators realize that the volume of new students each year requires both a cost-efficient and timely placement mechanism and that, to date, standardized tests are the quickest means to placement, but "quick" and "easy" should not be the primary determinants of a college's placement practices. We urge administrators to explore viable placement mechanisms that are true placement tools and to make these measures consistent among all state colleges.

Developmental programs rely too heavily on part-time employees.

Nationally, over a quarter of all students in higher education every year participate in some form of developmental education: over three million of the approximately thirteen million students. The ratio of fulltime faculty and staff to students, however, is disproportionate: only 3.3% of staff and 5.9% of faculty in American higher education work with developmental students. According to the National Study of Developmental Education of 1994, 72% of all faculty working with developmental students do so only on a part-time basis. (Boylan, 1995, Vol. 12). Reliance on such provisional faculty makes it difficult to organize professionally, gain stature on our campuses, and participate to our potential in college-wide retention efforts.

Although there is ample evidence for the need for developmental education, especially in West Virginia, surveys completed by West Virginia developmental faculty and administrators reveal the low rate of full-time faculty contracted to teach developmental classes exclusively. For example, Shepherd College has approximately seven hundred developmental skills students, but only three full-time faculty. Furthermore, Shepherd College's faculty did not even enjoy "faculty" status until two years ago.

Marshall Community & Technical College has over 1,300 developmental students but only eight full-time faculty; likewise, Fairmont State College in the fall 2000 semester had over 1,000 students but only seven full-time faculty, six of whom had release time for other academic activities, including teaching for academic divisions, administering the developmental program, and directing the college's tutoring program.

In addition, there is no consistent pay scale among state colleges for part-time faculty, and this has a significant effect on hiring and retaining developmental skills faculty, most of whom are part-time. After a 2% pay increase a few years ago, Fairmont State College now pays only $1224 per 3-credit course, but West Virginia University, just thirty miles north, pays $3000 per 3-credit course. Private institutions, such as West Virginia Wesleyan and Alderson-Broaddus College, pay higher part-time faculty salaries, as well.

Many times, the only difference in teaching load between a part-time faculty and a full-time faculty is one course. In some rare instances, a part-time faculty is contracted to teach the equivalent of a full-time load—but at the part-time wage. Furthermore, part-time faculty often hold the same or more impressive credentials than some tenured faculty who teach courses in degree programs. It is the hope of developmental educators and administrators that colleges recognize the need for additional full-time faculty in their developmental education programs or, at the very least, address the issues of salaries for part-time faculty. These faculty have no obligation to return to the institution, and many are gaining full-time employment in the public schools, in industry, and in higher education outside West Virginia. No one can be expected to play such an important role for such low wages on an indefinite basis.

Administrators often assume that human faculty can be replaced with technology.

With the increasing popularity of on-line courses and campus computer labs, many college administrators assume that such a combination would provide sufficient instruction for students with developmental needs; however, because developmental students often come to college burdened with job and family concerns—as well as academic deficiencies—developmental skills courses need to offer equivalent, if not more, opportunities for human interaction than do traditional college classes.

It is impossible, for example, for a student to learn and practice better reading and study skills if such skills development is not done in tandem with actual academic work. And while many programs include computer-assisted instruction in the forms of math tutorials, on-line discussion groups, and the use of certain skills development software, such as Pass Keys, those have been used with some success as a supplement to classroom instruction, not as their high-tech substitutes. Classrooms now from K-12 and beyond recognize the importance of collaborative work and in creating a community of learners. Developmental classrooms should be no different. Furthermore, developmental students are often at a greater risk for dropping out of college, and no computer or video player can recognize when a student is at particular risk for dropping out of school.

High school students are enrolling in developmental skills classes before they've graduated from high school.

Many college developmental education programs are becoming more active in alerting high school students to the specific skills they need for entry into college-credit English and math classes; some programs even offer early placement testing. Such early awareness projects, though, were designed to give students the opportunity to remedy those skills deficiencies *before* they entered college. Developmental education faculty, however, are now seeing students in their classes who are still high school students. (Note that these students have also earned the 3.0 high school GPA required for early dismissal to attend college classes.) And developmental skills classes, unlike the "dual" credit classes, are not underwritten in any way by the county boards of education, leaving the students and their parents paying the full tuition for these classes.

High school students should not be paying for developmental skills classes in college until they have exhausted all resources their secondary education system should offer free of charge. Although we cannot prohibit high school students from enrolling in them, we need to clarify that college developmental education programs do not recruit high school students; we have neither the faculty nor staff to accommodate such a population—however great the need may be.

Reports from the Field

Many state colleges in West Virginia have contributed information regarding developmental education activities at their institutions. Although we are a fragmented group in location and employment status, we do share professional aims and enjoy learning of and touting each other's accomplishments. Here are a few selected profiles:

Marshall Community & Technical College
Contact: Drema Stringer

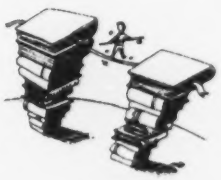
Marshall Community & Technical College served the academic needs of 976 developmental math students and 380 developmental English students in the fall 2000 semester. In addition, a course in "Conversational Grammar" was created for students who need to improve their spoken English skills. Faculty realize that, although students can overcome their struggles with written composition, they are often "marked" by their errors in grammar when speaking, which can impede their chances for professional employment. Students are not required to take this course, yet many do enroll to supplement their developmental instruction.

Shepherd College
Contact: Billie Unger

Shepherd College provided mandated instruction to 375 math students and 181 English students during the fall 2000 semester. For the past year, one of Shepherd's full-time developmental faculty has been working with an area high school in an "early assessment" workshop program. Musselman High School students take the college's math and writing placement tests to see how well-prepared they are for the college's entry-level English and math courses. Students may use their initial scores for placement, or as a "prescription" for use in improving their skills before taking the placement tests officially.

Potomac State College
Contact: Peter Paulson

Potomac State College addressed the developmental education needs of almost 200 of its 1,100 students in the fall 2000 semester. The college also offers an Orientation course and a Reading course. Potomac State College faculty volunteer as tutors for developmental students who need additional instruction time.



West Virginia State College
Contact: Kim Lovinski

West Virginia State College was the host of this year's annual conference for developmental faculty, staff, and administrators. The West Virginia Association for Developmental Education conference was fortunate to have Dr. Robert McCabe as keynote speaker. McCabe's text, No One to Waste: A Report to Public Decision-Makers and Community College Leaders, is the result of government-sponsored research and discusses why America will continue to depend on community college remedial education.

West Virginia State College faculty also completed a pilot project in which a cohort of 25 students enrolled in four classes together: Math, Writing, Reading, and Study Skills/Personal Development. The students were offered tutoring and counseling services, as well. WVSC faculty are currently assessing the impact that these concurrent enrollments had on these students' academic performances.

West Virginia Northern Community College
Contact: Mark Goldstein

West Virginia Northern Community College enrolled a total of 588 students in its developmental education courses, including 398, 116, and 76 in its developmental math, reading, and writing classes, respectively. Of that total developmental enrollment, 25% (147) are enrolled in two or more developmental courses.

Developmental courses continue to attract the positive attention of WV Northern's college faculty, who desire well-prepared students in their freshman level courses. WV Northern recognizes the role that developmental education plays in retaining these "at risk" students.

West Virginia University Institute of Technology
Contact: Tammy Bibbie

WVU Tech and Verizon are combining resources to provide a course in Career Exploration/Technology Orientation via teleconferencing to seven high schools in West Virginia. Students will learn about technical careers, employment prospects, and education and training requirements for these jobs. Such a program will alert high school students to the career possibilities they have in West Virginia, providing they are able to meet the academic demands these careers entail. A goal of this new program is to impress upon high school students the importance of both oral and written communication, and the need for students to take more math classes in high school.

In addition, WVU Tech has recently appointed a full-time administrator of the college's developmental program who supervises the developmental faculty and courses and administers the Pass Keys software program for supplemental skills development.

West Virginia University-Parkersburg
Contact: Randy Oldaker

WVU-P has re-instituted its English as a Second Language program. Students work both in groups and individually with a linguist. This semester, students are working primarily on writing, pronunciation, and vocabulary building.

Other students in the developmental education program are using the Pass Keys computer software as a supplement to classroom instruction.

Southern West Virginia Community & Technical College
Contact: Calisa Pierce

Southern WV C&T College changed the name of its Developmental Education division to Transitional Studies. This emphasizes that their courses are a bridge, or transition, between high school/GED programs and success in college-level courses. The institution also expanded its Beginning Composition and Introductory Algebra courses to four credit hours this fall (one of these hours is spent in a learning lab.) As a result, pass rates for these two courses have each increased sixteen percentage points from the previous fall semester.

The Transitional Studies program internal documentation in recent semesters shows that 100% of the students who earned credit in their developmental skills classes and passed the subsequent college-credit course are still enrolled at the institution or have graduated.

Glenville State College
Contact: Gayle Burkowski

A full-time faculty member, who teaches both developmental composition and college-credit English courses, performed extensive, classroom research in which she examined the quantity and nature of students' sentence boundary errors in composition. Her research indicated that 75% or more of comma splice errors had the same grammatical form, and that this form can easily be described for developmental writers, giving them a concrete means by which to detect and correct their sentence boundary errors. Such practical research helps students become more independent editors of their own work.

Fairmont State College
Contact: Nancy Parks

Research of each graduate from the spring 2000 and fall 2000 semesters indicates that the college's developmental education program was directly involved in the retention and success of over half the school's graduates in those semesters. Of all BA/BS students who graduated in spring 2000, 46% had taken at least one developmental skills course; 47% of all AA/AS students had a developmental skills course in their history. Of all BA/BS students who graduated in fall 2000, 57% had taken at least one developmental course; 59% of all AA/AS graduates had a similar history.

In addition to its developmental skills courses, the college's Learning Skills Center also sponsors the college's peer tutoring program, which serves students in all academic disciplines. The program schedules approximately 2,000 appointments each semester.

Also, for the past three years, the developmental education program at FSC has hosted an Early Assessment program for high school juniors and seniors. This academic outreach program takes the college's placement testing, including ACT practice tests, "on the road" so more high school students and their teachers know how well prepared the students are for college classes. In addition, the program offers walk-in placement testing for all prospective students; students may reserve any satisfactory scores for placement when they register for classes or may re-test later. Early Assessment has reached over one thousand high school students.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

It cannot go without saying: Developmental education is no "cash cow" (Mezzatesta, WV Community College Conference, October 2000). College faculty and administrators want as many incoming freshmen as possible to enter college already prepared for their academic programs. That is why developmental educators are forging closer connections with the secondary school system and with industry. That is why developmental programs are seeking to integrate high school assessment with college placement programs. Although retention experts agree that successful completion of the developmental program should be the primary means of evaluating the success of a developmental program, most developmental education programs still track their students' performance in their subsequent college courses. Once a developmental student, that student always has a support system within that unit. Most people do not begrudge being required to take developmental skills courses when the alternative is "sink or swim." Furthermore, colleges do count the course hours for all practical purposes other than graduation credit.

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